

CONSERVATION LAND ACQUISITION PROJECTS SELECTION SYSTEM
Massachusetts Self-Help Program & Federal Land and Water Conservation Fund

In order to distribute limited grant funds among an overwhelming number of applicants, a project selection system has been developed for conservation land acquisition projects. The selection system includes an interagency review and rating of each project, and an evaluation of the applicant community's commitment to sustainable development criteria developed by the Office for Commonwealth Development. The rating system considers demographic, social, environmental and project quality factors in order to identify those projects which best protect both natural and passive outdoor recreational resources in communities which have the greatest need for financial assistance and which have made efforts to implement their open space plans in coordination with local planning for sustainable growth.

Interagency Review

The Executive Office of Environmental Affairs' Interagency Lands Committee (ILC) reviews conservation land acquisition project applications to ensure project coordination with state agency programs, executive orders and environmentally sound land use policies. The Committee consists of representatives from the Departments of Conservation and Recreation, Fish and Game, and Agricultural Resources, and can include other EOEa personnel. The ILC considers each project and its impact on the statewide conservation vision articulated in *An Open Space Plan for Massachusetts: A Partnership*, and *Massachusetts Outdoors 2000! – The Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP)*. The ILC also serves as the review panel to satisfy the National Park Service requirements under the Open Project Selection System. DCS coordinates the interagency review of all applications and submits all comments and recommendations to the Secretary of Environmental Affairs for final funding decisions.

In reviewing applications and developing their recommendations to the Director of Conservation Services, the ILC considers:

1. Demographics

Four categories are evaluated by DCS to calculate a community's demographic score. Communities with higher Population Density, lower Equalized Valuation Per Capita, lower Median Income, and lower Percentage of Households Below Poverty Level receive higher demographic scores. (Scores are calculated by DCS; therefore, there is no need to submit any statistics or narrative on your community's behalf.)

2. Community Profile Score

Environmental Justice Community – calculated by EOEa's EJ Director.

Commonwealth Capital Score – EOEa encourages land use decisions that protect environmental quality and preserve natural resources. Unplanned growth not only threatens the environment, it also can adversely affect the timely provision of needed infrastructure, and has a tremendous fiscal impact on communities. This impact, in turn, puts future economic opportunities at risk. The Office for Commonwealth Development has developed sustainable development criteria and will evaluate and score each applicant community. Please submit a Commonwealth Capital Application for your community, available online at <http://www.mass.gov/ocd/comcap.html>, to obtain your score.

3. Project Quality

- Water Resources: frontage on water resources, recreational utility, and protection of drinking water supplies;
- Green Infrastructure: size of the acquisition and its proximity to other protected open space;
- Multiple Uses: purpose for acquisition, in addition to passive public recreation;
- Biodiversity and Resource Protection: subject property contains resources identified by *Massachusetts Outdoors 2000!*, the Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan, the Natural Heritage and Endangered Species program, Massachusetts Historical Commission, or Areas of Critical Environmental Concern. Applicants must include written comments from any of the following state agencies: the Massachusetts Natural Heritage Program Office, or the Massachusetts Historical Commission, or ACEC program as appropriate.
- Consistency with *Massachusetts Outdoors 2000!*: Points awarded based "Inferred Need for New Recreational Areas" under Chapter 5: The Regional Perspective.

4. Partnerships

EOEA, like any other open space protection agency or organization, must have other financial partners. Projects that involve financial contribution from more than one municipality, or from a nonprofit organization will be given higher consideration. Projects that obtain technical assistance from other organizations will also benefit in the rating system.

5. The applicant's past performance on DCS funded projects.

Timely, comprehensive and diligent project management is critical to the success of a community's current and future applications. Applicants who have successfully completed prior projects, and who have no outstanding conservation or parkland conversion issues will be considered favorably.

SELECTION NOTE: Preservation of Agricultural Land

Executive Order #193 discourages the irreversible conversion of the Commonwealth's productive agricultural land base. State Grants shall not be used to encourage the irreversible conversion of agricultural land to other uses when feasible alternatives are available. In the event that all feasible alternatives have been explored, and the conversion of suitable agricultural lands to non-agricultural use remains the only feasible alternative to protection of open space, a mitigation plan must be developed to be eligible for reimbursement under a state grant. Project which would convert any prime agricultural lands should consult with the Department Agricultural Resources at (617) 626-1700 prior to submitting an application.

RATING SYSTEM for Conservation Acquisition Projects

CATEGORY	SUB-CATEGORY	Description	Partial Points	Max
DEMOGRAPHICS	Population Density	Figures obtained from MISER and put into rank order by DCS	1 through 4	5
	Median Income	Figures obtained from MISER and put into rank order by DCS	1 through 4	5
	Percentage of Households below Poverty Level	Figures obtained from MISER and put into rank order by DCS	1 through 4	5
COMMUNITY PROFILE SCORE	Environmental Justice Community	Calculated by EOE's Environmental Justice Director	1 through 4	5
	Sustainable Development Criteria - Commonwealth Capital Score	Criteria developed by Office for Commonwealth Development and required for all "Commonwealth Capital" grant programs. Open Space and Recreation Plan, Housing Compliance, and Local Funding Initiatives among other criteria are considered (see http://www.mass.gov/ocd/comcap.html for details).	1 through 29	30
PROJECT QUALITY	Water Resources	Frontage on ocean, or estuarine habitat.	15	15
		Lake, pond, major river, water supply (surface or ground) i.e. Zone II or reservoir, regionally important wetlands (DEM 1978), cold water fishery stream	10	
		Secondary river or stream with recreation potential, frontage on small streams, small wetlands	5	
	Green Infrastructure	250+ acres of upland forest, wetland or water resources that create a hub or corridor of permanently protected land; expansion of existing hub or corridor (including those protected by APR or CR)	15	15
		Acquisitions of between 100 - 249 acres that 1.) link to other Article 97 lands or 2.) are within a Critical Ecosystem (MNHESP)	10 points	
		Acquisitions of less than 100 acres that 1.) link to other Article 97 lands or 2.) are within a Critical Ecosystem (MNHESP)	5 points	
	Multiple Uses	Water Supply Protection	4+ uses 5 pts	5
		Agricultural Use	3 uses - 4 pts	
		Passive Recreation	2 uses - 2 pts	
		Historic or Archeological Interpretation	1 use - 0 pts	
	Biodiversity and Resource Protection	Project contains resources identified by the: * Statewide Land Conservation Plan * MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program * Massachusetts Historical Commission * Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Program * Five-Year Watershed Action Plans (http://www.mass.gov/envir/water/publications.htm)	5	5
		Project abuts identified resource area, or is likely to contain resources identified by the: * Statewide Land Conservation Plan * MA Natural Heritage and Endangered Species Program * Massachusetts Historical Commission * Areas of Critical Environmental Concern Program * Five-Year Watershed Action Plans http://www.mass.gov/envir/water/publications.htm	3	
	Consistency with <i>Massachusetts Outdoors 2000!</i>	Points awarded based "Inferred Need for New Recreational Areas" under Chapter 5: The Regional Perspective. http://www.mass.gov/envir/dcs/global/publications.htm .	1-6	6
PARTNERSHIPS	Cooperative Effort between Municipality and one or more Partner(s)	Other Sources of Funding from another Municipality or Nonprofit Organization	4	4
		*Management Plan: Technical Assistance and Signature on plan	2	
TOTAL				100